



JOSEPH P. RILEY, JR.
MAYOR

City of Charleston
South Carolina

BARBARA W. VAUGHN
DIRECTOR
PUBLIC INFORMATION

FOR RELEASE: June 19, 2007, 2 p.m.

Comments from Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr.

Charleston City Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. said the entire Charleston community is grieving for the loss of nine City of Charleston firefighters who died Monday night fighting a devastating blaze at a furniture store late Monday night.

"The brave acts of these nine men have touched the lives of everyone. When others run away from a fire to escape it, firefighters are the ones who run into the danger to try to save lives and property. It is their job," Riley said. He said he has received calls of condolences and offers of help from all over the country today.

"These are brave, humble people who are ready to go in and protect others," Riley said.

Riley said the city has been working with members of the firefighters' families and this will continue, "not just today and tomorrow, but in the days, weeks, months and years ahead. These are historic figures that will never be forgotten. They gave their lives unflinchingly to protect the lives of others."

He said the fire is being fully investigated and declined to comment on its cause until all information is available.

Riley praised the leadership of Charleston City Fire Chief Rusty Thomas, who leads the City's Class 1 Rated Department, the highest ranking available nationwide.

Thomas thanked all the city's firefighters and praised the nine men lost in Monday's blaze – firefighters with a range from 2 years to 30 years of service.

"We've lost over 100 years of dedicated service," Thomas said. "I lost nine of my best friends. We have a long road ahead of us, but we're going to stand tall. We will never forget these nine firefighters who lost their lives last night doing what they love to do – fight fires."

During a 2 p.m. press conference, Charleston County Coroner Rae Wooten released the names of the nine firefighters and their length of service to the city. She said she was touched by the graciousness of their families and their efforts to reach out to others during this emotional and heart wrenching time.

See separate release for full names of the firefighters.

FOR MORE INFO:

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